

CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE COMPLAINTS

Please Note: Key points emphasized by underlining

- **Overall prevalence of these incidents**
 - False allegations
 - Child victims rarely intentionally lie about sexual abuse
 - Most cases of “coaching” are relatively obvious
 - “Stranger Danger” versus reality
 - Case examples
 - Review of relevant statutes
 - Offense is determined by a combination of:
 - Consent or lack thereof
 - Age of the victim and age of the offender
 - Sexual act involved
 - “Age of consent” for sexual activity in Kansas is 16 years of age; in Missouri it is 17 years of age.
 - “sexting”
- **How are these incidents investigated?**
 - Importance of the initial disclosure being handled correctly
 - We use “Sunflower House”, a Child Advocacy Center (CAC), for victim interviews
 - Many cases are jointly investigated with DCF
 - Cases may be resolved with a custodial arrest but most cases are submitted to the District Attorney’s office for review and possible charging
 - Outcome options
- **What are Church staff’s appropriate concerns and responsibilities when abuse is observed or reported?**
 - Make sure the child is safe and that the abuse has stopped
 - Listen carefully to what the child tells you, react calmly, and assure the child that you believe them
 - Notify the child’s parents, unless they are the alleged abusers; in those incidents police should be notified right away
 - Do not interview the child, doing this correctly requires special training and skill; doing this incorrectly can severely damage the criminal case.
 - Keep the child completely separated from the alleged offender
 - Do not interview, or share any further information with, the alleged offender
 - Suspend the alleged offender from any child care related duties and contact until the criminal investigation is complete
 - Protect and preserve any potential physical evidence
 - Report the incident to the DCF/DSS Hotline and/or to local law enforcement immediately!
 - 800-922-5330 or www.dcf.ks.gov in Kansas
 - 800-392-3738 in Missouri
 - Do not conduct your own in-house investigation until the criminal investigation is complete

- **What do we know about working with these victims**
 - Child victims are often scared to tell anyone
 - They often do not understand what has happened to them
 - The offender may be a loved one whom they do not want to get trouble
 - They feel like they are destroying their family by telling about the abuse
 - The victim may have been threatened and/or bribed not to tell
 - They are often scared that no one will believe them
 - They may be embarrassed by what has happened to them
 - Previous victims of sexual abuse are five times more likely to be abused again
 - Child victims often first disclose to an age mate friend and/or to a trusted adult at school, church, etc.
 - Victims may “act out” behaviorally in many different ways
 - Child victims should be sent to Children’s Mercy Hospital for sexual assault examinations and medical treatment (“SCAN” clinic 816-234-3424)
 - Child sexual abuse can have devastating long term effects
 - Treatment/counseling is essential for victims to minimize long term consequences of the abuse; with support and good treatment most victims recover

- **What do we know about these types of offenders**
 - They come from all walks of life and are often well respected in their community
 - They purposely put themselves in situations where they will have contact with children (i.e.: as volunteers for youth organizations, etc.)
 - They will often have adult sexual relationships
 - Many will offend on both boys and girls
 - Their own childhood sexual behavior problems were often not identified early and there was no intervention
 - Most offenders are male but there are female offenders also
 - Offenders often spend a lot of time selecting and “grooming” their victims
 - The offender may provide the child victim with special attention, gifts, fun outings, etc
 - The victim’s family will often know and trust the offender
 - The offender may use various tactics with the victim to introduce and normalize sexual activity
 - Inappropriate texting or other social media contact
 - Sexual jokes
 - Pornography
 - These offenders will often have multiple victims
 - Adult versus juvenile offenders

- **Resources**

- **Sunflower House** – Child Advocacy Center (CAC) for Johnson and Wyandotte Counties in Kansas. They do forensic victim interviews for law enforcement and DCF, prevention education, and on-site victim therapy.
 - 913-631-5800
 - www.sunflowerhouse.org (their website describes their various education and prevention classes for adults and children)
- **Child Protection Center (CAC)** in Kansas City, MO
 - 816-778-8000
 - admin@cpcckc.org
- **Metropolitan Organization to Counter Sexual Abuse (MOCSA)**
 - They provide sexual assault counseling and prevention education on both sides of the state line
 - 816-931-4527
 - www.mocsa.org (very good written resources on their website)
- **National Center for Missing and Exploited Children**
 - 1-800-843-5678
 - www.missingkids.com
 - Cybertip hotline and on-line safety training sites
- **“Darkness to Light”**
 - www.d2l.org
- **Johnson County, KS District Attorney’s office**
 - Victim’s assistance unit at 913-715-3000
 - www.jococourts.org for information on specific court cases by defendant’s name
- **Kansas Department of Children and Families (DCF)**
 - Hotline 800-922-5330
 - www.dcf.ks.gov
- **Missouri Department of Social Services (DSS)**
 - Hotline 800-392-3738
 - www.dss.mo.gov

“Understanding and Protecting Your Children from Child Molesters and Predators:” article by Cory Jewell Jensen and Steve Jensen, available on-line

Predators: Pedophiles, Rapists, and Other Sex Offenders: book by Anna C. Salter, PhD.

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